REMARKS

Claim Objections

The objection to claims 25-26 is overcome by amending claim 25 to properly spell the word "stainer". Removal of the objection is kindly requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The rejection of claims 23-24 is respectfully overcome by changing "the fill level" to --a fill level-- in claim 23. It is respectfully asked that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

Claims 1, 3-4, 6-7, 22, and 25 are rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by US 6017495 (Ljungmann). Amendments made to independent claims 1 and 25 provide a clear basis for removing this rejection as discussed below.

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate limitations found in original claims 3, 10, 11, and 13, now canceled. Claim 25 has been amended to incorporate the limitation of Claim 26, now canceled. Given that Ljungmann does not anticipate claims 10, 11, or 13, it follows that claim 1 as amended, and claims 4, 6-7, and 22 depending from amended claim 1, are novel over Ljungmann. Likewise, because Ljungmann does not anticipate claim 26, it follows that claim 25 as amended is novel over Ljungmann.

Accordingly, removal of the anticipation rejection based on Ljungmann is kindly sought.

Claims 1, 3-6, 8-11, 13, 22, and 25 are rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by US 6080363 (Takahashi et al.). The rejection is moot with respect to claims 3, 10, 11, and 13, which are canceled. Independent claims 1 and 25, as amended, are distinguishable over (Takahashi et al.) for the reasons discussed below.

Claim 1 now requires that each of the containers include a connector fitting on a bottom wall thereof for coupling the container to a water supply system. Referring to Fig. 4 of the present application, a connector fitting 23 is clearly seen on the bottom wall of container 5. Advantageously, the container 5 can be filled with water and drained through connector fitting 23. Takahashi et al., at Fig. 14, shows rinsing vessel 10 (container) having an opening 51 through a side wall thereof. The opening is surrounded by a sealing ring 52 which forms a seal with water supply pipe 12 when the water supply pipe is inserted through opening 51 to extend into vessel 10. The bottom wall of vessel 10 lacks any structure meeting the "connector fitting" limitation of claim 1. In the apparatus of Takahashi et al., there is drainage of water overflowing

from vessel 10, however there is no provision for drainage through the bottom of the vessel to completely empty the vessel so it can be removed and cleaned in an easy manner.

Claim 25, as amended, includes the limitation of canceled Claim 26, which was not found to be anticipated by Takahashi et al. Therefore, claim 25 is now novel over Takahashi et al.

Claims 4-6, 8, 9, and 22, which depend from claim 1, are novel over Takahashi et al. for the reasons given above with respect to claim 1.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully ask that the rejection based on Takahashi et al. be withdrawn.

Claims 1-4, 6, 8-11, 13-15, 19-20, 22, and 25-26 are rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by US 3837795 (Becker et al.). The rejection is moot with respect to claims 3, 10, 11, and 13, which are canceled. Independent claims 1 and 25, as amended, are distinguishable over (Takahashi et al.) for the reasons discussed below.

The vessels 142 of Becker et al. receive a wash manifold 144 through an opening provided near the top of the vessel as shown in Fig. 11. Therefore, drainage is not possible through the wash manifold 144. In the present invention as defined by claim 1, the connector fitting is provided on a bottom wall of the container to allow for flow into and out of the container. Becker et al. further lacks a connector rail on pan 160, such that vessels 142 are freely positionable in the pan. Consequently, if care is not taken, a vessel 142 may inadvertently be placed over the drain fitting 162 manifold causing preventing operation of the drainage system. So, claim 1 is now thought to be novel over Becker et al.

Claim 25 includes the limitation "wherein said inflow is automatically regulated" in connection with inflow to the containers. Becker et al. teaches a solenoid valve 40 which can be turned on (opened) to allow water to flow to a series of downstream manually operated regulator valves 44, 45, and 46. See column 8, lines 45-57. Consequently, inflow to vessels 142 is manually regulated using manually operated regulator valves 44, 45, and 46, and is not automatically regulated as specified by amended claim 25. Thus, claim 25 is not anticipated by Becker et al.

Claims 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 19, 20, and 22, which depend from claim 1, are novel over Becker et al. for the reasons given above for claim 1.

On this basis, it is respectfully asked that the rejection under 35 USC 102 citing Becker et al. be removed.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

Claims 7 and 12 are rejected under 35 USC § 103 as being unpatentable over Takahashi et al. This rejection is respectfully overcome in view of amendments made to parent claim 1 which patentably distinguish parent claim 1 over Takahashi et al. Takahashi et al. does not teach or suggest the structure recited in claim 1, from which claims 7 and 12 depend. Therefore, favorable reconsideration of claims 7 and 12 is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 14-21, and 26 are rejected under 35 USC § 103 as being unpatentable over Takahashi et al. in view of Becker et al.

With regard to claims 2, and 14-21, this rejection is respectfully overcome in view of amendments made to parent claim 1 which patentably distinguish parent claim 1 over both Takahashi et al and Becker et al. as discussed hereinabove. Neither of the references teach or suggest the improvement as defined by in claim 1. Moreover, concerning the subject matter of claim 16, it is argued that use of 3/2-way valves for enabling both filling and emptying of the containers is not obvious from Takahashi et al or Becker et al. because neither reference suggests draining through the same connector fitting used for filling. Regarding claim 18, it is noted that the valves shown in Becker et al. do not share a common outflow as claimed; each valve has its own corresponding outflow. Finally, regarding claim 21, there is not teaching in either references of fluid lines running below the pan from valves to connector openings in a connector rail.

Concerning claim 26, now incorporated into amended claim 25, it is emphasized that inflow to the vessels is not automatically regulated in either Takahashi et al or Becker et al.

For these reasons, withdrawal of the rejection is kindly sought.

Claims 23 and 24 are rejected under 35 USC § 103 as being unpatentable over Takahashi et al. in view of Becker et al. in further view of US 5049510 (Repasi et al.). This rejection is respectfully overcome in view of amendments made to parent claim 1 which patentably distinguish parent claim 1 over Takahashi et al. and Becker et al. Additionally, Repasi et al. suggests placing a fill level sensor on a container to measure fill level of the container, and not on an overflow pan as claimed. In the present invention, sensor 22 is associated with the collective overflow pan 8 receiving overflow from the plurality of containers 5, such that shut-off occurs if drainage from the pan is insufficient. This feature is not part of the references.

Therefore, allowance of claims 23 and 24 is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicants thank the Examiner for her efforts in examining this application. For the reasons set forth above, favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions, or the attorneys for applicants can assist in any way, the undersigned attorney may be contacted at the number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

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By _____
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GLS/
Enclosures: Petition for 3-Month Extension of Time
Fee Transmittal
Fee Check for $950.00

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